

Issue #2

PBRN Week in Review | January 30, 2009

PBRN Grantees: Please circulate relevant information to your network members. For additional information and suggestions for future items, please contact Sharla Smith, smithsharlaa@uams.edu or 501-526-6629.

Notable Accomplishments this Week

- A proposal for a Learning Session on Public Health PBRNs was developed and submitted for consideration as part of the NACCHO Annual Meeting, Scheduled for the last week of July in Orlando Florida. The proposed session will examine the plans, activities and early experiences of several networks that are part of the first cohort of the RWJF Public Health PBRN Initiative, giving special emphasis to the potential roles to be played by PBRNs in measuring and demonstrating the “Value of Public Health” – one of this year’s key themes. As of submission time, representatives from the Massachusetts, Colorado, and Washington PBRNs were signed on as panelists. If the session is accepted we will be open to including additional panelists from other networks. We anticipate that each panelist will describe the motivations behind their networks, the roles played by practitioners and researchers within these collaborations, the types of interventions and practices identified for study, and the general approaches that PBRNs can use to assess the value and impact of public health activities.
- PBRN Initiative Director Glen Mays was in North Carolina this week to meet with collaborators on a research study involving preparedness and public health systems. While there, he had the good fortune to drop in on a meeting of the North Carolina PBRN and learn about the early progress being made in the Tar Heel state. This network has been engaged in an in-depth process to elicit, analyze and synthesize research interests among key network participants and stakeholders. We are sure that this process and its findings will be of considerable interest to the other PBRNs. To that end, we will be inviting our North Carolina colleagues share their process and early findings at an upcoming edition of the monthly PBRN conference call.
- PBRN Coordinating Center staff are preparing to launch a short electronic survey designed to identify the information needs and technical assistance needs currently faced by PBRN directors/managers during this early phase of network start-up. This information will help the Coordinating Center anticipate and direct resources to PBRNs that will help with network development activities. Among the resources at hand are expert consultants that PBRNs can tap via their allotment of consultation time (recall that 20 days are pre-loaded into each PBRN’s “technical assistance account”). Other resources include communication and collaboration tools, webinars

and other training sessions, annual meeting content, and website content. In addition to identifying these initial information and TA needs, we hope to obtain a better fix on the existing assets and areas of expertise that each network already possesses that could be shared with other PBRNs via meetings, conference calls, and other exchanges. The web-based survey link will be sent out to primary contacts at each of the five PBRNs, and if desired, network directors/managers can forward this survey link to other active participants in their network. The information obtained will be summarized, synthesized, and reported back out to our group of PBRN directors/managers for our collective use in planning.

PBRN Meeting at the Keeneland Conference

- The first in-person meeting of the five public health PBRN grantees will take place on Tuesday April 7 in conjunction with the *Keeneland Conference on Public Health Systems and Services Research* at the University of Kentucky in Lexington. The agenda is not yet final, but we anticipate that the meeting will commence at 9am and conclude by 3pm. The primary audience for the meeting will be PBRN project directors/managers, but grantees are welcome to invite other key participants in their networks to attend. This meeting will be an opportunity for in-depth discussions of the strategies that grantees are using to develop their network, prioritize research interests, and plan initial research activities. Members of the PBRN National Advisory Committee will also be on hand for the discussions. Following the PBRN meeting, grantees are encouraged to stay on and attend the Keeneland Conference, which will begin with a plenary speaker and dinner at 6pm, and run through April 9.
- On the morning of Wednesday April 8, we will host a panel session at the Keeneland Conference on the *Role of Public Health PBRNs in Advancing Public Health Systems Research*. We would like to include a speaker from each of the five PBRN grantees on this panel if at all possible. We will be discussing the format and content of this session during the February conference call and via email—your ideas are needed and most appreciated.

Other Activities on the Horizon

- The accreditation movement continues to roll forward in public health with the work of the Public Health Accreditation Board (PHAB). PHAB has been hard at work developing accreditation standards and processes for use with both local and state public health agencies across the country. A key milestone will be reached in February with the roll-out of a vetting process through which the public health community will be invited to review and comment on draft standards, measures and processes for determining accreditation status. Participation in the vetting process may prove to be a useful exercise for some of our public health PBRNs, particularly those who may have research interests that encompass issues of measuring performance in public health agencies and monitoring the impact of accreditation and

performance standards on public health practice. Interested participants can obtain more information on the vetting process soon at www.phaboard.org .

- Economic conditions are continuing to deteriorate across the country, and plans for a federal stimulus package are moving forward with several components aimed at public health infrastructure. As a result, we are likely to see significant changes in public health resources, and these changes are likely to play out in different ways across states and communities. PBRNs may be well positioned to study the diverse effects of these changes on public health practice. We are thinking about timely collaborative research opportunities that may emerge in this environment, and we welcome your thoughts on this as well.

Opportunities for Presenting/Publishing Your Work

- The PBRN Coordinating Center will be organizing a panel session on public health PBRNs at the 2nd Annual *Keeneland Conference on Public Health Systems Research*, to be held on April 8 in Lexington, KY. We would like to include a speaker from each of the five funded PBRNs to discuss their project's interests, activities, and early experiences. More to come on this opportunity.
- Abstracts for the American Public Health Association Annual Meeting are due February 9-13. We will be soliciting interest in a panel presentation at this meeting as well. Please call or email Sharla Smith with your interest at smithsharlaa@uams.edu or 501-526-6629.
- The PBRN Coordinating Center will be soliciting interest in a panel session on public health PBRNs for the AcademyHealth Public Health Systems Research Interest Group Meeting to be held in June in Chicago. Please call or email Sharla Smith with your thoughts at smithsharlaa@uams.edu or 501-526-6629. Information about the meeting can be found at: <http://www.academyhealth.org/interestgroups/phsr/callforpapers.htm>

Key Upcoming Dates

February 9-13 – Deadline for abstract submissions for APHA Annual Meeting

February 10, 9:30-10:30am EST – monthly conference call with PBRN project directors and project managers.

February 13, 10am PST – Panel session on public health systems research at *Preventive Medicine 2009 Meeting*, Los Angeles CA. Speakers include PBRN Advisory Group member Dr. Michael Caldwell along with Dr. Hugh Tilson and Glen Mays.

February 16 – Deadline for abstract submissions for presentation at the *AcademyHealth Public Health Systems Research Interest Group Meeting*.

<http://www.academyhealth.org/interestgroups/phsr/callforpapers.htm>

February 19, 9:30-11:00am EST – *PBRN Webinar on Public Health Systems Research*. Glen Mays, Doug Scutchfield, and Tim Van Wave will give a brief overview of PHSR, what we've learned to date, common methods and approaches, and new directions. This webinar is designed for all PBRN investigators, staff, and interested network partners. Connection information will be sent via separate email.

March 13 - Deadline for registration for the *Keeneland Conference on Public Health Systems Research*. www.publichealthsystems.org/media/file/2009KCRegistrationFormPDF.pdf

Funding Opportunities for Public Health Systems Research

- RWJF is developing a new program focus area on public health law that is likely to open new opportunities for research on the design, implementation, and impact of public health law and policy. We will keep you apprised of funding opportunities.
- RWJF has a newly active program to support research that evaluates the use and impact of quality improvement techniques in public health practice. The deadline for the first round of funding closed in December 2008 but we will keep you apprised of subsequent funding opportunities.
<http://www.rwjf.org/applications/solicited/cfp.jsp?ID=20581>
- A new program announcement from the National Institutes of Health looks particularly well suited for practice-based research in public health. *Using Systems Science Methodologies to Protect and Improve Population Health (R21)*. This FOA solicits Exploratory/Developmental (R21) applications from institutions/organizations that propose to apply one or more specific system science methodologies to “policy resistant” public health problems and contribute knowledge that will enhance effective decision making around the development of and prioritization of policies, interventions, and programs to improve population health in the U.S. and abroad, especially where resources are limited and only a limited number of programs/policies/interventions can be implemented. Standard NIH submission deadlines apply. <http://grants.nih.gov/grants/guide/pa-files/PAR-08-224.html>

Next Issue: February 5, 2009